



STATEMENT
CONCERNING
FINNISH-RUSSIAN RELATIONS
AND THE
CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO
**THE INVASION OF
FINLAND**
BY THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST
REPUBLICS ON NOVEMBER 30, 1939

HX
632
A1
W9
No. 1346
MAIN

*Based on Official Documents published by
The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland*

LONDON

PUBLISHED BY SIMPKIN MARSHALL, LTD.
at 4 Stationers' Hall Court, London, E.C.4
To be purchased through any bookseller or newsagent
Price 3d. net



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2018 with funding from
University of Alberta Libraries

<https://archive.org/details/statementconcern00finl>

STATEMENT CONCERNING FINNISH-RUSSIAN RELATIONS
AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THE INVASION
OF FINLAND BY THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST
REPUBLICS ON NOVEMBER 30, 1939.

I. HOW FINLAND BECAME A NATION

In order to view in their proper perspective the events which led to the invasion of Finnish territory by Russian military, naval and air forces on 30th November, 1939, it is necessary to understand something of the history of Finland and of her previous relations with Russia.

An Individual People.

The inhabitants of Finland are an individual people having neither national nor racial affinity with Russia. Her long connections with Sweden and Scandinavia have made Finland a member of the group of Northern States in every respect. Thus the Finns are Nordic in character.

Two thousand years ago these early Finns began to cross to the Northern shores of the Gulf of Finland, which were then inhabited by the Lapps, and it was at the opening of the Christian era that the country we now know as Finland gradually began to assume shape.

Under Swedish Rule.

In the middle of the twelfth century Sweden brought Christianity into Finland, and until the nineteenth century the country was part of the Kingdom of Sweden.

In those days all social and political rights and privileges enjoyed by the people of Sweden were equally enjoyed by the people of Finland. The kings of Sweden were also the kings of Finland, and, hand in hand, these two peoples built up in Northern Europe that civilisation which they now enjoy, and which many foreign observers have declared second to none in the world.

For hundreds of years these two states have been intensely democratic, and it is interesting to notice that Finland and Sweden are among the few countries on the Continent of Europe whose people have never been serfs, or anything other than free men and women.

During the seven centuries in which Finland and Sweden were united there were many wars with the eastern nation, Russia, and owing to Finland's geographical position her country was more than once the battleground. But until the nineteenth century the enemy was always thrown back.

The Russian Conquest.

In February, 1808, the Russian Government again sent her

troops into Finland, but on this occasion the invasion had all the strategy of a major war effort. It was learned afterwards that the attack had been agreed upon by Napoleon, Emperor of France, and Alexander I, Czar of Russia, at their meeting in Tilsit in 1807 and one of the reasons was that the Swedes and Finns had refused to join in Napoleon's Continental Blockade of England.

By 1809, after an heroic resistance by the Finns, the Russian conquest was complete, and Finland became a Grand Duchy attached to Russia, with the Czar Alexander I reigning as Grand Duke. The former Constitution of Finland was preserved by Alexander I and for nearly a century the Finns were allowed to retain their cultural standards and democratic constitution. This period of one hundred years was highly important in the development and consolidation of the Finnish nation.

About the year 1890, however, the Czar Nicholas II began a systematic oppression of the Finnish people in violation of the Constitution agreed upon by Alexander I and all later rulers of Russia.

In 1899 a manifesto asserted the right of Russia to legislate in Finland without the consent of the Finnish Diet, or Parliament, on any matter deemed to have a bearing on Russian interests.

In 1901 the Finnish army was disbanded by order of the Russian Government.

The Finnish Revolt.

It seemed at this time that the free and independent Finnish people would become nothing more than a vassal state of Russia. But in the face of growing Russian oppression Finland began to resist by refusing to obey the illegal Russian decrees, and insisted that her constitutional rights should be respected. It was this period in her history which is referred to as the era of passive resistance.

The collapse of Russia in the Great War gave the Finnish people their long-waited-for opportunity. When the Russian Revolution began, representatives of the former regime in Finland were removed and patriots who had been exiled were allowed to return to their own country.

While the revolution was at its height and complete anarchy reigned in Russia, the Finnish Government and Parliament took the destiny of the country into their own hands. On the 6th of December, 1917, Finland declared herself a sovereign and independent state.

Finland Becomes a Free Nation.

It was a great day in the history of Finland. A nation which had so gallantly fought for her existence while under Russian rule and oppression was at last free to mould and shape her own destiny. The new independence was recognised by the new Bolshevik rulers of Russia and by Lenin himself on 31st December, 1917.

Yet Finland was even then not free of the Russian yoke.

Although independence had been solemnly recognised, Bolshevik Russia did not recall her troops. On the contrary, these troops commenced an agitation against the Finnish Government, and Finland realised that if her independence was to become a reality, she had to drive them out by force.

It must be emphasised that when the Finnish Government took the fateful decision to use force for establishing order and the real independence of Finland, it acted with the whole-hearted approval of Parliament which had been elected on the basis of universal suffrage, established, with votes for men and women, in 1906.

Military operations commenced at the end of January, 1918, and by the middle of May the enemy had been driven out of Finland and Finland had won her independence.

In April, 1918, German troops landed in Finland. But it is important to record that when they arrived all decisive battles against Bolshevik troops had already been fought by the Finnish Army under the leadership of General Baron Mannerheim.

By the Peace Treaty negotiated with Russia at Dorpat, Estonia, on 14th October, 1920, the centuries-old frontier between Finland and Russia was confirmed. The Soviet Union ceded to Finland the Petsamo district on the coast of the Arctic Sea to conform with a promise made long before by the Czarist Government.

II. FINLAND TO-DAY

In view of the charges against Finland made in certain quarters by those who try to defend and justify the Russian aggression, it is now necessary to state the course of events since the signing of the Peace Treaty of 1920.

The Finnish Government, free to pursue its own ideals of national freedom and racial independence, has maintained a modern and progressive policy in face of the economic and political unrest which have beset Europe since the end of the Great War of 1914-18.

Trade Relations with Great Britain.

The country is economically sound, and, thanks to wise legislation and a rising export trade in timber, wood-pulp, paper, butter and other agricultural produce to all parts of the world, has established good financial reserves.

Before the World War, Finland's import and export trade had mostly been with Russia, but in 1918, when the Russian market disappeared, Finland had to find new markets.

Within a comparatively short time she managed to do this, and it is interesting to notice that Great Britain quickly became the most important buyer of Finnish goods, taking some 45 per cent. of the country's exports.

The importance of Finland and of the Northern States of Europe to the overseas trade of Great Britain is not, however, confined to their exports. Last year, these five States, Denmark, Finland,

Iceland, Norway and Sweden, bought from Great Britain goods to the value of some £40,000,000, an amount greater than that of any other country in the world, including the United States, Australia and India.

Democratic Finland.

There are no great aggregations of wealth, nor indeed is there any real poverty in Finland. Alone of all the countries who owe money to the United States, she has paid interest and part of the principal of her war debt regularly every year. The Finnish foreign debt is now so small that it totals no more than approximately £4 per head of the population, and this is amply covered by the Government's assets abroad.

Parliamentary Government has been consolidated. Eight parties are represented in the Finnish Parliament, which numbers 200 and is elected by universal suffrage. Universal suffrage was introduced in 1906 when women were given the right to vote and were allowed to sit in Parliament. The Press is entirely free, and for her population Finland has more newspapers and periodicals than any other country in the world.

A United Nation.

All types of workers are united in Finland. There is no class war in Finland and never can be. Agriculture occupies 59.6 per cent. of the population, and every man can own his own land if he desires. Only 6.5 per cent. of the total land area is owned by corporations or companies, compared with 52.1 per cent. privately owned, 39.7 per cent. owned by the State and 1.7 per cent. by communities.

There is an eight-hour day, and holidays with pay for all workers up to a maximum—after ten years' service—of one month. Child labour under 14 is unknown ; only 6 hours' work a day is permitted between the ages of 14 and 15.

The Finnish worker more often than not owns his own flat, cottage, or garden plot. There is no slums problem. Factories and mills are among the most up-to-date of any in the world.

No Unemployment.

Unemployment has been unknown in Finland for many years. The economic system built up in recent years has brought about such ideal conditions that there is always work for every man.

Few countries have so high a standard of education. Among persons over 15 years of age only 0.9 per cent. are illiterate. There are three Universities in Finland, and an advanced educational system for the poorest child.

The Finns are one of the most healthy races in Europe, and the country occupies an important place in the world of athletics.

In the cultural field Finland has, during the last 20 years, made very considerable progress. Schools and hospitals have been built everywhere. The present Commander-in-Chief, Field Marshal Baron Mannerheim, has organised a Children's Welfare Society which

now embraces the whole country. The Finnish Red Cross has undertaken many important child welfare missions of an outstanding character.

Finland has paid particular attention to raising the standard of life of the population, particularly in the frontier districts adjacent to Russia. There are local hospitals in all parts of the great forest areas, and much has been done to improve the general standard of health.

Finland also is quickly earning a place for herself in European culture. The skill of her artists and architects can be seen in the beautiful new buildings and statuary which have appeared not only in Finland but also in Paris, London, and New York during the past few years. Her poets and musicians have gained general recognition. The genius of Sibelius is hailed the world over.

The Finns are Free.

It is important, in viewing the events that led to the Russian invasion of Finland, to stress again that there have never been any minority problems in this country, no oppression or capitalistic dictatorship, no distress or unrest among workers, and no hardship in working conditions. In fact, nothing whatever from which Finnish workers might desire to be "freed."

The workers of Finland are free. Their own representatives are members of the present Finnish Cabinet.

III. FINNISH-RUSSIAN RELATIONS SINCE 1920

Since the conclusion of the Peace Treaty of 1920, Finnish-Russian relations have been correct. In 1932 a Non-Aggression Pact was concluded between Finland and Russia, in which it was agreed that all disputes which might arise between the two countries, and which could not be settled through the usual diplomatic channels, should be submitted to a mixed conciliation commission composed of four members—two representing each country.

In this agreement both the contracting parties also declared that they would always settle all disputes between themselves, whatever their origin might be, in a spirit of justice, and only by peaceful means.

This Non-Aggression Pact was reaffirmed in 1934 to remain in force until 1945.

Closed Frontiers.

The close intercourse which is usual between two neighbouring countries did not, however, develop even after the Non-Aggression Pact of 1920, owing to the fact that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics kept her frontiers strictly closed against Finland except at the Rajajoki River where the railway connects the two countries.

The development of political and trade relations have been hampered principally by the totally different constitutional and economic systems existing in the two countries—in the Union of Soviet

Socialist Republics a dictatorship with a Communist state economy, and in Finland a democracy with an individualistic economic system.

Finnish Efforts for Friendship.

In spite of these difficulties Finland has made every effort to develop closer relations.

In the first place, from time to time, trade delegations were sent to Russia for the purpose of laying a foundation for the increase of trade, but without any positive results worth recording.

Finnish-Russian trade shows the following import and export figures during the years 1936-1938 :—

		1936	1937	1938
Exports from Finland to Russia (of total Finnish exports)	0.5%	0.6%	0.5%
Imports to Finland from Russia (of total Finnish imports)	1.9%	1.4%	1.2%

At the beginning of 1937, M. R. Holsti, who was then Foreign Minister of Finland, visited Moscow with the intention of bringing about improved relations between the two countries. In view of the fact that through various sources, Russia had let it be known that she suspected Finland of conspiring against her, M. Holsti proposed that all questions disturbing the relations between the two countries should be once and for all cleared up.

The proposal, which should have been further discussed through normal diplomatic channels, did not lead to any positive results, nor did Russia return the visit of the Finnish Foreign Minister. This was the nature of relations between the two countries until October, 1939.

IV. CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO THE INVASION OF FINLAND

On 5th October, 1939, M. Molotov, Prime Minister of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, requested Baron Yrjoe-Koskinen, the Finnish Minister in Moscow, to call upon him. At the meeting he asked the Finnish Minister to convey to his Government the desire of the Russian Government for Finland to send a special representative to Moscow for an exchange of views and to negotiate on various questions of a political and economic character which, for some time past, had been discussed through diplomatic channels.

A Serious Situation.

This desire on the part of the Soviet Government was conveyed to the Foreign Minister of Finland, M. E. Erkko, on the same day, and an official *communiqué* was issued in Helsinki outlining the desire of Russia and adding that the Finnish Cabinet was deliberating on the matter.

In view of developments which had recently taken place in Russian relations with the States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the Finnish Government could be in no doubt as to the real significance of the Russian desire for negotiations.

On 8th October the Finnish Cabinet decided to accept the invitation of the Russian Government. It empowered its envoy in Stockholm and former Prime Minister, Dr. M. J. K. Paasikivi, to act as the Government's special representative in the Moscow talks. Dr. Paasikivi is recognised as one of the country's most experienced statesmen, and was the leader of the Finnish delegation to the Finnish-Russian Peace Conference at Dorpat in 1920.

In announcing the acceptance of the Russian invitation, the Finnish Foreign Minister made the following statement in Helsinki on 8th October :—

“The Russians have not specified the questions which are down for discussion, but it is the normal diplomatic procedure for one country to make to another a general proposal of this nature. Thus, though we are unaware what is concerned, we can only answer the invitation affirmatively. Dr. Paasikivi, therefore, only goes to take note of the Russian desires, but whatever these may be our position is clear.

“We stand by Northern neutrality and our unconditional neutrality which has been repeatedly affirmed. We threaten none, seek no advantage, and will not adhere to any great power or group. Our sole desire is to live in peace with all, and remain outside conflicts.”

The Opening of the Talks.

The Finnish delegation, led by Dr. Paasikivi and supported by Colonel Paasonen, formerly Military Attaché in Moscow, and M. Nykopp, of the Finnish Foreign Office, arrived in Moscow on 11th October, and talks opened at the Kremlin on 12th October.

At these first conversations it quickly became evident that Soviet Russia had vital territorial demands to make. After the first phase of exchange of views and general principles, a number of proposals designed to improve Finnish-Russian relations were handed to the Finnish representative. These proposals were as follows :—

The Soviet Proposals.

The Soviet Union is mainly concerned with the settling of two questions :—

(a) Securing the safety of Leningrad.

(b) Becoming satisfied that Finland will have firm, friendly relations with the Soviet Union. Both points are essential for the purpose of preserving against external hostile aggression the integrity of the Soviet Union coast of the Gulf of Finland and also of the coast of Estonia, whose independence the Soviet Union has undertaken to defend.

In order to fulfil this duty it is necessary :

1. To make it possible to block the opening of the Gulf of Finland by means of artillery fire from both coasts of the Gulf of Finland in order to prevent warships and transport ships of the enemy from penetrating to the waters of the Gulf of Finland.

2. To make it possible to prevent the access of the enemy to



those islands in the Gulf of Finland which are situated west and north-west of the entrance to Leningrad.

3. To have the Finnish frontier on the Isthmus of Karelia, which frontier is now at a distance of 32 kilometres from Leningrad, i.e. within the range of shots from a long distance gun, moved somewhat farther northwards and north-westwards. (*This would mean placing in the hands of the Soviet Union the 20 mile zone of frontier fortifications now generally termed the "Mannerheim Line."*)*

A separate question arises with regard to the Kalastajasaarento in Petsamo, where the frontier is unskillfully and artificially drawn and has to be adjusted in accordance with the annexed map.

With the preceding as a basis it is necessary to settle the following questions by having in view a mutual arrangement and common interests :—

1. Leasing to the Soviet Union for a period of 30 years the port of Hangö and a territory adjoining thereto situated within a radius of 5-6 nautical miles southwards and eastwards and within a radius of 3 nautical miles westwards and northwards, for the purpose of creating a naval base with coastal artillery capable of blocking by artillery fire, together with the naval base Paldiski on the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland, the access to the Gulf of Finland. For the protection of the naval base the Finnish Government should permit the Government of the Soviet Union to keep in the port of Hangö the following garrison :—

- 1 Infantry regiment,
- 2 Anti-aircraft batteries,
- 2 Air Force regiments,
- 1 Battalion of armoured cars,

Altogether not more than 5,000 men.

2. Granting to the naval forces of the Soviet Union the right of using the bay of Lappohja as anchoring berth.

3. Ceding to the Soviet Union, in exchange for other territories, the following territories :—

The islands Suursaari, Seiskari, Lavansaari, Tytarsaari and Koivisto, part of the Isthmus of Karelia, from the village of Lippola to the southern border of the town of Koivisto, and the western parts of the Kalastajasaarento, in total 2,761 square kilometres (*approximately 1,066 square miles*).

4. In exchange for the territories mentioned in paragraph 3, the Soviet Union cedes to the Republic of Finland, Soviet Union territory of the districts of Repola and Porajarvi to the extent of 5,529 square kilometres (*approximately 2,134 square miles*) in accordance with the annexed map.

5. Strengthening the Non-Aggression Pact between the Soviet Union and Finland by including therein a paragraph according to which the Contracting Parties undertake not to join any groups or alliances directly or indirectly hostile to either of the Contracting Parties.

6. Suppression of the fortified zones situated on both sides of the frontier between Finland and the Soviet Union and leaving

* Explanations in italics have been added in order to clarify the text.

Frontier Guard troops only at the frontier. (*This proposal would have meant the destruction of all Finland's existing fortifications constructed since the Peace Treaty of 1920.*)*

7. The Soviet Union does not object to the fortifying of the Aaland Islands (*in the Baltic Sea*)* by Finland's own work provided that no foreign power, Sweden included, has anything to do with the question of fortifying the Islands.

What the Proposals Meant.

In order that the real nature of the proposals may be made clearer in the minds of the people of Great Britain and other English-speaking nations, the following analogy may be of value :—

If the proposals were being made to the Government of Great Britain by a neighbouring power some forty times stronger, they would be as follows :—

1. Britain must cede the Channel Islands to the foreign power.
2. The Isle of Wight must be fortified by the foreign power.
3. Britain must hand over the port of Southampton in order that it might become a Naval and Air base for the foreign power.
4. Britain must hand over the Orkney Islands, to be fortified by the foreign power so that it will have complete control of Scapa Flow and the ports of Scotland.
5. Britain must destroy most of her important defences, leaving in their place soldiers with rifles.
6. Britain must cede to the foreign power an area on the coast of Norfolk extending to a distance of 50 miles inland.

As compensation, the neighbouring power would be willing to cede to Great Britain some hundreds of square miles of barren land of no strategic or economic importance.

It is obvious that no free and independent British nation could accept such proposals, and whilst Finland's size and geographic situation places her in an entirely different position from that of Great Britain, it must be remembered that she is nevertheless a free, independent and peace-loving people.

The Finnish Reply.

On 12th October the Russian proposals were conveyed to the Finnish Cabinet by the Finnish representative, Dr. Paasikivi. The proposals, far-reaching and exacting as they were, received the earnest consideration of the Finnish Cabinet.

The Finnish Mission returned to Helsinki on 16th October, when Dr. Paasikivi had immediate consultations with the "Inner Cabinet," comprising M. A. K. Cajander, the Prime Minister, M. E. Erkko, the Foreign Minister, M. V. Tanner, the Finance Minister, and M. J. Niukkanen, the Defence Minister.

As a result of these deliberations, the Finnish delegation returned to Moscow on 23rd October and were received at the Kremlin in

* Explanations in italics have been added in order to clarify the text.



the evening of that day. On this occasion the delegation was strengthened by the addition of the Finnish Minister of Finance, M. Tanner, who is the leader of the Social-Democratic, or working-class party in Finland.

It was at these meetings with M. Molotov that the Finnish Reply to the Soviet proposals was placed before the Russian Government. The reply was as follows :—

After having carefully examined the proposals of the Government of the Soviet Union regarding the settling of the relations between Finland and the Soviet Union, the Finnish Government hereby define their attitude.

Finland understands the efforts which the Soviet Union is making with a view to securing a more effective defence for the protection of Leningrad. As repeatedly stated, Finland wishes her relations with the Soviet Union to remain friendly and good. In order to enable both these objects to be achieved Finland on her part is willing to consider means for meeting the requirements of the Soviet Union. Naturally, this is conditional upon the requirements of Finland's own security being taken into consideration and upon care being observed to maintain Finland's complete neutrality. By such a policy Finland contributes, in the best of ways, to strengthening the peace in Northern Europe, and this policy Finland also believes to be the most advantageous to her neighbour, the Soviet Union.

The Finnish Government is convinced that by mutual goodwill it is possible, without detriment to Finland's security and without violating her neutrality, to achieve the objects which are referred to above and which, in the memorandum transmitted by the Soviet Union to Finland, are indicated as the basis of the Soviet Union's policy.

For the purpose of achieving these objects the Finnish Government are prepared to agree to the arrangements indicated below, subject to these being approved also by the Finnish Parliament :—

1. The Finnish Government is prepared to make an agreement to the effect that the following islands situated in the Gulf of Finland be ceded, against territorial compensation, to the Soviet Union, viz.: Seiskari, Peninsaari, Lavansaari and the Tytärsaari islands. In addition the Finnish Government is willing to discuss an arrangement regarding Suursaari whereby the interests of both parties are taken into consideration.

2. In view of Leningrad's vicinity to the Finnish frontier and in order to enable the security of Leningrad to be increased through a frontier adjustment, the Finnish Government is prepared, against territorial compensation, to make an agreement regarding the adjustment of the frontier on the Isthmus of Karelia on those points where, from the said point of view, the frontier is inconvenient to the Soviet Union. The frontier would run from Rajajoki east of Haapala, straight to the Gulf of Finland on the eastern side of the church of Kellomäki. Thus the so-called Kuokkala-bend would disappear. At the same time the frontier would be moved 13 km.

westwards on this point. Finland is unable to consider an adjustment of the frontier to the extent mentioned in the proposal of the Soviet Union, because Finland's own position and security would be endangered thereby. In addition the territory in question is a very densely populated district of ancient Finnish habitation and the cession thereof would mean destruction of the homes of tens of thousands of Finnish citizens and their removal elsewhere.

3. With reference to the port of Hangö with adjoining territory and the bay of Lappohja the Finnish Government are bound to uphold Finland's integrity. The cession of military bases to a foreign Power is already incompatible with unconditional neutrality, as this is being conceived in Finland and elsewhere. The idea that armed forces of a foreign Power would be stationed on Finnish territory permanently and for a long period cannot be accepted by Finland; these forces could also be used for attack upon Finland. Such an arrangement would continuously create disagreement and unnecessary irritation and this would not contribute to improving the relations between the two countries, which is the aim of the present arrangements.

4. The Soviet Union has notified her wish to consolidate the Non-Aggression Pact between her and Finland in such a way that the Contracting Parties would undertake not to join any groups or alliances of States which directly or indirectly are hostile towards either of the Contracting Parties. However, the Finnish Government are of the opinion that Article 3 of the said Non-Aggression Pact, prohibiting the adherence to agreements of every kind being openly hostile towards the other Contracting Party and formally or materially in contradiction to the said Pact, does already contain everything which States having mutually friendly relations can reasonably claim from each other in this respect, without endangering their good relations to other States and their attitude of strict neutrality. The Finnish Government is prepared, if the Soviet Union so wishes, at any time to give a further assurance that it will honestly fulfil the said obligation. With reference to Article 2, paragraph 1, of the said Non-Aggression Pact, in which paragraph the Contracting Parties undertake to observe neutrality in cases where the other Contracting Party becomes the victim of aggression on the part of a third State, the Finnish Government in order to show its goodwill, could agree to the said paragraph being made clearer and confirmed in such a manner that the Contracting Parties undertake in no way to support such an aggressor State. By "supporting" should not, however, be understood any such attitude which is in conformity with the general rules of neutrality such as continuance of normal exchange of goods and transit trade.

5. The Finnish Government note with satisfaction that the Soviet Union does not object to the fortification of the Aaland Islands by Finland's own work. On account thereof the Finnish Government state that it has always been its intention that this fortification should be carried out by Finland's own work and at her own expense and to the extent required for maintaining the

neutrality of the said islands, thereby taking into consideration the neutrality obligations of the Convention of 1921 which are still in force.

Continued Talks.

Following this reply, the Soviet Union made it clear to the Finnish representatives that she was insistent on Finland leasing to her the port of Hangö and ceding a considerably larger area of the Karelian Isthmus than Finland had agreed to. The Soviet Government stated that it was unable to withdraw this proposal for placing a naval base at the disposal of the Soviet Union at Hangö because it considered this proposal an absolutely indispensable minimum for safeguarding the defences of Leningrad.

Up to this moment, it may be stated, the conversations were of an entirely friendly and amicable nature, and the representatives of Finland had no reason whatever to assume that the difficulties and problems contained in the Soviet proposals and Finnish counter-proposals could not be settled in a spirit of justice and by means of peaceful arbitration.

It must be strongly stressed that at no time was any third power consulted in regard to the Russian proposals. Indeed, conditions of the greatest secrecy were maintained by the Finnish Cabinet during the long period of discussions.

Many Visits to Moscow.

On 24th October the Finnish Delegation again returned to Helsinki in order to receive fresh instructions, and thereafter, for almost a month, the Finnish representatives made repeated visits to Moscow in an attempt to reach a fair and honourable solution to the problems that confronted the two countries.

End of the Talks.

On 13th November, the Finnish representatives left Moscow for the last time, and at that moment a deadlock had been reached. Finland was willing to accede to almost all the Russian proposals, which had now assumed the nature of demands, but she could not find it possible to accede to the Soviet request for a naval base at Hangö, which would have meant the complete strategic dominance of Finland and in turn the loss of Finnish independence.

There followed a period of silence, during which Finland maintained strict and careful relations with Russia and neighbouring powers, and every safeguard was taken to prevent any incidents or aggravation of the situation.

Moscow Propaganda Campaign.

A Russian campaign of abuse against Finland was commenced in the press and on the radio on 15th November. It was alleged that the Finnish ruling classes did not desire an agreement with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, while the working classes, on the other hand, were most anxious to secure friendly relations with the Soviet Union.

Throughout the negotiations the people of Finland repeatedly demonstrated that they were at one with their Government, and were as concerned with the safeguarding of their freedom and independence as the Finnish Government itself. There was never at any time in Finland a lack of confidence in the Government and Cabinet, except perhaps the fear that the Cabinet might offer too many concessions to the Soviet Union.

During the next few days the Russian campaign of abuse and threats against Finland continued with greater force through the medium of the press and radio and by means of hastily-called public meetings.

The Frontier Incident.

On 26th November it was announced in Russia that Finnish artillery on the Karelian Isthmus fired seven rounds which fell on Soviet territory, killing one N.C.O. and three men of the Red Army, and wounding one officer, one N.C.O., and seven men.

On the evening of that day, the Russian Commissar of Foreign Affairs, M. Molotov, handed a note to the Finnish Minister, Baron Yrjoe-Koskinen, demanding that Finnish troops should be removed twelve to fifteen miles from the frontier with the object of avoiding a repetition of such incidents.

The story of this frontier incident was a deliberate distortion of the truth. Sensible of the importance of avoiding frontier incidents, the Finnish Government had moved all its artillery many miles back from the Finnish-Russian frontier at the beginning of November, and on 26th November there were no guns in the region stated which could possibly have reached Soviet territory. The most advanced Finnish artillery unit, consisting of a light field battery, stood 20 kilometres, or 12.4 miles, from the frontier on 26th November.

Any Further Negotiations Rejected by Russia.

On the evening of 26th November, M. Molotov handed a note to the Finnish Minister in Moscow referring to Finnish mobilisation on the Karelian frontier as a hostile act against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, culminating in the alleged incident on the frontier on that day. He demanded that the Finnish troops should be removed by some 10 kilometres, or 6.2 miles *behind* their forward line of defences.

The Finnish Government replied to this note on 27th November, but was not able to accept the demand, on the ground that the situation compelled the defence of the Finnish frontier in Karelia ; the alleged frontier incident was emphatically denied.

It should be pointed out that Russia had begun mobilisation in the Leningrad district as far back as September, 1939, and remained mobilised while negotiating the demands for Finnish territory.

The Finnish note of 27th November was conciliatory in tone and restrained in wording, and the Cabinet suggested that the alleged frontier incident should be examined jointly by Soviet and Finnish experts.

Even at this late hour Finland expressed her willingness to settle the Finnish-Russian problems by any method of peaceful arbitration which Moscow was ready to suggest, and there was a firm belief in Helsinki that there would be no difficulties in the path of reaching a successful conclusion to the unfortunate dispute between the two countries.

Denunciation of the Non-Aggression Pact.

The Non-Aggression Pact, which had been drawn up between Finland and Russia in 1932 and reaffirmed in 1934 to stand inviolate until December, 1945, was suddenly and without official notice denounced by the Soviet Union on 28th November.

At the same time Soviet abuse of Finland through press and radio reached its height in wildness and fury. Meetings of night workers, hurriedly arranged, were held in order to invoke popular hatred against the people of Finland who were now represented as about to attack Russia.

America's Bid for Peace.

On the evening of 29th November, M. Molotov, the Soviet Prime Minister, announced that his Government had broken off diplomatic relations with Finland, and that the Red Army and Navy must be ready for any eventuality.

At the same time the United States Minister in Helsinki, Mr. Schoenfeld, and the United States Chargé d'Affaires in Moscow, Mr. Walter Thurston, transmitted to the respective Governments of Finland and Russia, the willingness of the United States of America to extend their good offices for the settlement of the dispute between Russia and Finland.

The Finnish Foreign Minister expressed to the United States Minister, Finland's readiness to accept the United States' offer, especially since communications with the Soviet Government had ceased.

In Moscow, the Vice-Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Potemkin, gave no hint that the good offices of the United States were desired, but said that the communication would be conveyed to M. Molotov.

Russian Invasion and Aggression.

Three hours after the United States Minister had visited the Finnish Foreign Office in Helsinki, in the early hours of 30th November, 1939, Russian artillery began to bombard Finnish territory. At dawn on that day Soviet Air Forces attacked Finland, brutally bombing and machine-gunning 14 Finnish towns and localities, and ruthlessly killing civilians, including women and children.

The invaders came out of the sky, on a clear sunlit morning, without notice or warning, and commenced their aggressive war of destruction.

Finland's Readiness to Arbitrate.

Even when the bombs were dropping about her cities, and her

people were lying dead and wounded in her streets, Finland still expressed her willingness to negotiate with the Soviet Government.

Through a radio announcement, the Finnish Government made one further effort to negotiate, and expressed its willingness to accede to all Russian demands and requests which were not inconsistent with Finland's policy of strict neutrality, which did not threaten her national defences, and which would not affect her freedom and independence as a sovereign State.

But there was no reply ^f

Finland will Fight.

On 1st December the confidence in the Cabinet, seen expressions of the people's desire to defend the Government, and the aggressor.

On the same day, the clearly stated that this might way betokened surrender.

The Cabinet resigned in view of all parties in the Finnish Parliament, and the united defence of the country.

The following pronouncement by Minister, M. Ryti, in a speech, attitude to the Russian invaders:

"If we must fight, we shall fight. The Russians will not have us. We will defend every inch of our land. Russian aggressors will meet resistance."

"For a successful fight, we Finns have a high and noble cause and our very existence, and for the future of Europe. We fight for human justice, which makes life itself worth living."

HX 632 A1 W9 no.1346
World communism in the 20th century.

0172047A MAIN

Even at this late hour Finland expressed her willingness to settle the Finnish-Russian problems by any method of peaceful arbitration which Moscow was ready to suggest, and there was a firm belief in Helsinki that there would be no difficulties in the path of reaching a successful conclusion to the unfortunate dispute between the two countries.

Denunciation of the Non-Aggression Pact.

The Non-Aggression Pact, which had been drawn up between Finland and Russia in 1932 and reaffirmed in 1934 to stand inviolate until December, 1945, was suddenly and without official notice denounced by the Soviet Union on 28th November.

At the same time Soviet abuse of Finland through press and radio reached its height in wildness and fury. Meetings of night workers, hurriedly arranged, were held in order to invoke popular hatred against the people of Finland who were now represented as about to attack Russia.

America's Bid for Peace.

On the evening of 29th November, M. Molotov, the Soviet Prime Minister, announced that his Government had broken off diplomatic relations with Finland, and that the Red Army and Navy must be ready for any eventuality.

At the same time the United States Minister in Helsinki, Mr. Schoenfeld, and the United States Chargé d'Affaires in Moscow, Mr. Walter Thurston, transmitted to the respective Governments of Finland and Russia, the willingness of the United States of America to extend their good offices for the settlement of the dispute between Russia and Finland.

The Finnish Foreign Minister expressed to the United States Minister, Finland's readiness to accept the United States' offer, especially since communications with the Soviet Government had ceased.

In Moscow, the Vice-Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Potemkin, gave no hint that the good offices of the United States were desired, but said that the communication would be conveyed to M. Molotov.

Russian Invasion and Aggression.

Three hours after the United States Minister had visited the Finnish Foreign Office in Helsinki, in the early hours of 30th November, 1939, Russian artillery began to bombard Finnish territory. At dawn on that day Soviet Air Forces attacked Finland, brutally bombing and machine-gunning 14 Finnish towns and localities, and ruthlessly killing civilians, including women and children.

The invaders came out of the sky, on a clear sunlit morning, without notice or warning, and commenced their aggressive war of destruction.

Finland's Readiness to Arbitrate.

Even when the bombs were dropping about her cities, and her

people were lying dead and wounded in her streets, Finland still expressed her willingness to negotiate with the Soviet Government.

Through a radio announcement, the Finnish Government made one further effort to negotiate, and expressed its willingness to accede to all Russian demands and requests which were not inconsistent with Finland's policy of strict neutrality, which did not threaten her national defences, and which would not affect her freedom and independence as a sovereign State.

But there was no reply from Moscow . . .

Finland will Fight.

On 1st December the Finnish Parliament recorded a vote of confidence in the Cabinet, and all over Finland there were to be seen expressions of the people's solidarity, their own confidence in the Government, and their determination to stand up to the aggressor.

On the same day, the Finnish Cabinet resigned, but it must be clearly stated that this move meant no change in policy and in no way betokened surrender as was freely suggested at that time.

The Cabinet resigned in order that a War Cabinet, representative of all parties in the Finnish Diet, might immediately be formed for the united defence of the country.

The following pronouncement was made by the new Prime Minister, M. Ryti, in a broadcast speech outlining the Finnish attitude to the Russian invasion :—

" If we must fight, we shall fight to the end—and even after. The Russians will not have a parade march through Finland. We will defend every inch of our land, and every step taken by the Russian aggressors will mean heavy losses for them.

" For a successful fight a nation must have an honourable cause. We Finns have a high and sacred cause. We fight for our independence and our very existence. We fight for our homes, our families and for the future of our children, and of generations to come. We fight for human justice against brute force, and for all that makes life itself worth while."

